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ABSTRACT

Chicano English, spoken by many Chicanos and some Anglos, is an ethnic variety of English that serves as a marker of social identity, and it has specific linguistic parameters. It is similar to standard English, and often exists alongside interference English, spoken by Spanish-speakers beginning to learn English. Research supports the argument that Chicano English is a not just a product of language interference with Spanish, but is a dialect, but negative attitudes have kept it from being recognized as such, much as happened with Black English. Once Chicano English is accepted as an ethnic dialect, there are many implications for language assessment, particularly as research uncovers more specific diagnostic tools to distinguish the interference English speaker, who needs help through instruction in English as a second language, from the Chicano English speaker, who could profit most from a bidialectal approach. The dialect's linguistic parameters also have implications for literacy development, especially in writing, that are not always obvious. Knowledge of the differences, or interference, between Chicano and standard English can assist teachers in making fewer mistaken assumptions about presumed student error patterns. Although there is much to be learned about literacy development and Chicano English, and standard English can be used as a bridge to learning orthographic conventions, it would be a mistake to force Chicanos to adopt standard English speech in order to write standard English. (MSE)

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# CHICANO ENGLISH: IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT*

Joyce Penfield

## BACKGROUND

As a result of the bilingual education movement, there is now available a great deal of research on several Chicano speech repertoires, including code-switching and varieties of Chicano Spanish. This also has involved studies of bilingualism, language acquisition, and learning of standard English in classroom settings. Until very recently, however, little research has been conducted on an English vernacular used by a majority of Chicanos throughout the Southwest--Chicano English.[1] Thousands of children using Chicano English do not speak Spanish or speak it only minimally; and millions of bilingual adults, fully proficient or even dominant in English, speak Chicano English. In spite of this, Chicano English is still regarded as an incorrect or imperfect type of English resulting from Spanish interference. Past research has done little to correct this misconception. Thus, it is common to find misguided practices in education, such as failing Chicano students on a speech test for certification in California because of their "foreign accents" (Peñalosa, 1980, 1981) or placing them in Spanish-dominant classes because of their English speech patterns. Unfortunately, while the Ann Arbor decision[2] has made the public and educators more sensitive to one

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*A portion of this paper was presented at the American Association of Applied Linguistics in New York in December 1981.

[1]In this paper, Chicano is considered equivalent to Mexican-American.

ethnic dialect of English, Black English,[3] it has not yet been applied to other ethnic dialects of English and certainly not to Chicano English, even though many of the same conditions exist.

The purpose of this paper is to provide descriptive evidence that Chicano English is a variety of English with its own norms of appropriateness, as opposed to a product of language interference with Spanish, and that it serves important social functions in the bilingual community. In addition to the linguistic parameters of Chicano English, implications for language assessment and literacy development will be discussed in this study.

## DEFINITION

What is Chicano English? It is not the English spoken by Chicanos or Mexicans who are learning English, because this group does not actually constitute a community. It is not the English spoken by Mexican or Chicano characters on television or in novels because these cater to an Anglo stereotype of how Chicanos speak. Chicano English is the English spoken by many Chicanos and by some Anglos as well. It is an ethnic variety of English that

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[2]Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor School District Board, 473 F. Supp. 1371, 1979.

[3]The Ann Arbor decision required teachers of Black English-speaking children to have at least 20 hours of linguistic instruction in the systematicity of this dialect so that they could better assess students' linguistic needs, diagnose and prepare materials with a nondeficit approach. For a complete discussion, including the text of Judge Joiner's landmark decision and the educational plan submitted by the Ann Arbor Board of Education, see The Ann Arbor Decision, 1979, and Whiteman, 1980.

serves as a marker of social identity, often a positive one that signifies in-group membership and brotherhood. It is possible to specify the linguistic parameters of Chicano English; this will be done in a later section.

Chicano English has traditionally been defined in terms of its approximation, or lack of it, to standard English. Indeed, in terms of vocabulary, word formation, and sentence structure, Chicano English is quite similar to standard English. The most pronounced differences between the two linguistically can be found in pronunciation of consonants and vowels, and intonation and rhythm (Penfield, in press-b).

Often existing alongside Chicano English--and complicating the problem of defining the parameters of this ethnic dialect--is the English of the new learner, which we will refer to as interference English. Interference English is the interlanguage produced by adult and child monolingual speakers of any variety of Spanish who are in the process of learning and using English. Since Chicano English has developed in contact with standard English and other varieties of American English, it is not surprising to find that Chicano English shares some linguistic traits with the interference English spoken by native Spanish speakers. However, even though some linguistic features may overlap, several features are not shared by Chicano English and interference English speakers. The most significant difference, however, between Chicano English and interference English is that the former constitutes a speech community whose members' social identity is related to this form of speech, while the latter does not. In terms of the framework of Gumperz (1968) and Hymes (1974), a speech community is defined as a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech.

Baker (1947) suggested that in contact situations a language can serve the social function of identifying a group as a group. We will argue in this paper that a language variety--specifically, Chicano English--can do likewise. Most important, Chicano English is the product of socialization into a community's way of speaking, whereas interference English is an approximation of standard English speech.

Past research on Chicano English (Bills, 1977; Ornstein et al., 1976) has argued that it is an ethnic dialect rather than a product of interference, i.e., it is not merely an imperfect mastery of standard English. At least three arguments support this interpretation. First, several linguistic aspects of Chicano English simply are not predictable from a contrastive analysis of Spanish and English (Bills, 1977). That is, several pronunciations in Chicano English cannot be attributed to a Spanish influence since they do not even exist in Spanish. For example, the common alternation of /sh/ and /ch/ in Chicano English produces such pronunciations as "sheck" for "check" or "shange" for "change." Since most Spanish dialects do not have the sound /sh/, it cannot be argued that such a pronunciation is Spanish-derived or the result of interference. Numerous other examples occur. Each of these examples serves as a diagnostic tool for distinguishing a Chicano English speaker from an interference speaker and can be useful in language assessment, as will be explained in more detail later. More recently, work carried out with spectographs and other instruments by Godinez (in press; Godinez and Lindau-Webb, 1980; Godinez and Maddieson, 1980) at the UCLA Phonetics Lab has measured phonetic differences in certain vowels and consonants of Chicanos compared to Anglos, pointing out the phonetic system of Chicano English speakers. As a result, quantitative differences have been ascertained. Fieldwork conducted in East Los Angeles by Wald (1979, 1980a,

1980b), has also described the structure of Chicano English as an ethnic bilingual dialect.

A second argument in favor of treating Chicano English as a dialect is sociological. Thompson (1975) correlated societal values with speech features in Chicano English. He claims that pronunciation of certain sounds were correlated to different attitudes towards the significance of language in society, particularly in work domains. The pronunciation of certain vowels in Chicano English spoken by Chicanos in Austin, Texas, could be predicted according to each speaker's belief that a particular pronunciation enables people to find better work.

A third argument against an interference model for Chicano English is the fact that a growing number of English-dominant and English-speaking Chicanos do not speak Spanish. This is particularly true in southern California (Sanchez, 1978) and also has been documented by Thompson (1971) for third- and fourth-generation Chicanos in Austin, Texas.

The above three arguments are enough evidence to imply that Chicano English no longer can be regarded as a temporary, transitional phenomenon resulting from incipient bilingualism. The denial of its status as a dialect is based on misinformation and negative attitudes toward a Mexican ethnic heritage. This leads us to our next point: language attitudes.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD CHICANO ENGLISH

Besides negative attitudes toward bilingualism in society, Chicanos also have had to combat the typical "mainstream" attitude that views nonstandard English dialects as a mark of inferiority. Such attitudes are even more intensely applied to Chicano English. The assumption is that with practice and drill this "defective" type of English will disappear. Not even the

pressure of these attitudes, however, has been able to effect this result. Educational systems still have not dealt constructively with a crucial aspect of Chicano identity, their type of English. As Ornstein (1980) noted: "The main problem educators face with Black English, as with Mexican-American, Native American, or Hawaiian English, is less one of language than of attitude" (p. 209). Perhaps, instead of abandoning the use of Spanish at home and school or crusading to eliminate the use of Chicano English in the classroom, educators and parents should consider changing their own attitudes rather than their children's speech. Research on such change through so-called "bidialectal education" methods casts doubt on whether it is possible to change one's dialect in the first place (Dillard, 1978). Even those educators working with children who speak Black English, in which syntactic differences are numerous compared to standard English advocate nothing more than making children aware of the differences between the two.[4] To set out to eliminate a child's way of speaking is to deliver a blow to that child's self-concept. In cases where such misguided strategies occur and are enforced by Chicano bilingual teachers, one can observe teachers who are Chicano English speakers drilling children in standard English pronunciation which they themselves cannot make.

A great deal of research (Politzer, 1981; Ramirez, 1981; Ryan and Carranza, 1977; Williams et al., 1976) has been conducted on language

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[4]Dillard (1978) discusses two alternative approaches used by those who recommend bidialectal education for Black English speakers. The first is teaching standard English as a second dialect (SESD) which entails teaching the teachers about Black English as well as developing teaching materials on the principle of a contrastive analysis. Composition teachers have dealt with the use of Black English, for example, using a contrastive approach. The other approach, more controversial, is the use of nonstandard dialect in initial reading instruction.

attitudes of Anglos and Chicanos toward Chicano English. These studies reflect a broad range of attitudes in the Chicano community extending from its affirmation as a positive attribute symbolizing ethnic group identity and brotherhood to a negative view, held by those completely assimilated and acculturated to Anglo attitudes who see Chicano English as a defect to be overcome.

It is, perhaps, worthwhile here to review some of the research studies on elementary school teachers' attitudes toward Chicano English. Language attitudes have a strong impact on children's self-concepts and teachers play a large part in the formation of these concepts, whether consciously or unconsciously. Thus, research can provide insight into this domain.

In several different studies, Williams et al. (1976) discovered that teachers almost always distinguished children's speech samples in terms of two main types of attitudes: confidence/eagerness and ethnicity/nonstandardness. Often the appearance of a nonstandard form or two prompted teachers to categorize a child's speech as nonstandard or ethnic. One study that compared children of three ethnic groups, Anglo, Mexican-American (Chicano), and Black, revealed that Mexican-American teachers held stereotypes of the school population similar to Anglo teachers. Both groups rated Anglo children as possessing more confidence and less ethnicity as well as holding higher expectancies academically (Williams et al., 1976). This research has revealed that, unfortunately, some teachers may hold a very dim view of the capabilities of children who speak with an ethnic accent.

Galvan et al. (1976) found similar negative attitudes toward Chicano English among future teachers, even though many of them had taken basic linguistics courses in which subjective value judgments about language varieties were vigorously attacked. Research by Arthur et al. (1974) showed simi-

lar results. Thus, it seems that changing negative attitudes can be extremely difficult. This is true of attitudes toward other American English dialects, especially those associated with ethnic groups. Perhaps, then, a brief historical survey of these groups--especially Blacks, since most research has been devoted to Black English--would be helpful.

Before the wave of research on Black English in the 1960s, it was not recognized as a full-fledged dialect. Even today, linguistic historians debate whether a Black dialect exists apart from general Southern speech (Dillard, 1978). The tremendous amount of published research carried out on Black English (Dillard, 1972; Labov, 1970; Fasold and Shuy, 1970; Wolfram, 1969), however, left no doubt as to its status as an ethnic dialect. These linguistic studies were followed by applications to reading and the classroom in what is termed "bidialectal education." The most recent event, of course, was the Ann Arbor decision. The result, it is hoped, will be a greater sensitivity to problems related to dialect and more importantly, a greater acceptance of this by-product of ethnicity.

What can educators of Chicanos learn from the historical account of the role of Black English in educational institutions? Chicano English has not yet begun to trace its own historical path in terms of research, but even now it is easy to see the parallels between the two ethnic varieties and their problems. The first step in changing teacher's attitudes toward Chicano English is to acquaint them with its linguistic traits. The second is to learn how Chicano English may or may not interfere with the educational process. The third is to extend the Ann Arbor decision to schools within Chicano communities and to increase sensitivity toward Chicano English by instructing teachers of children who may speak it. Educators must be encouraged to spend less time correcting or trying to eliminate Chicano English and

more time helping students to develop greater ability to use all of the varieties of both Spanish and English with as much flexibility and imagination as possible.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

Once Chicano English is accepted as an ethnic dialect, rather than an imperfect English that must be stamped out and replaced by standard English, there are many implications that follow for language assessment. It is obvious that a deficit approach to Chicano English cannot be maintained unless there are pathological problems that individual children may have. Those children, however, who employ systematic linguistic features that really reflect the Chicano community no longer can be urged to alter their speech in favor of standard English.

In addition, educators must be careful not to determine Spanish dominance according to children's English pronunciation. The fact that a child does not speak standard English is no more a criterion for Spanish dominance or bilingualism than is possession of a Hispanic surname. At the same time, channeling children who are dominant in Chicano English (and perhaps monodialectal) into English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes just because they do not speak standard English must also be viewed as educationally fruitless and harmful to children's identities. There seems to be a need for an instrument for assessing passive knowledge and/or proficiency in standard English. Should children have difficulty understanding standard English, then there would be a need to provide bidialectal education just as has been done with speakers of Black English. Our research indicates that the biggest conflicts between the two dialects arise in the acquisition of literacy (writing)

skills. Thus, it is perhaps in literacy development and writing skill development that teachers need to be most aware of the role of Chicano English.

As more linguistic research is carried out on Chicano English, educators will obtain more specific diagnostic tools to distinguish the interference English speaker, who needs help through ESL, from the Chicano English speaker, who could profit most from a bidialectal approach. A general diagnostic tool that could be used is the linguistic fact that Chicano English speakers have fair to complete control of sentence structure (syntax) whereas interference English speakers do not. In addition, whereas interference speakers consistently tense the vowels /I/ to /iy/, /ɛ/ to /ey/, and /U/ to /uw/ to make homophonous forms like "bit" and "beat," "bet" and "bait," and "look" and "Luke," Chicano English speakers often do the opposite, pronouncing /I/ for words that really use /iy/ in standard English (e.g., [spIk] for "speak"). Such hypercorrections are widespread in Chicano English speakers' speech, but not in that of new English learners. Other specific diagnostic features will be identified as more research is conducted on Chicano English across the Southwest.

## LINGUISTIC PARAMETERS

Before describing some of the most prominent features of Chicano English, it is important to interject a comment. As with many other nonstandard varieties of English, Chicano English reflects a range of features that no one individual employs 100 percent of the time. It is also likely that communities vary significantly due to sociological factors. For example, Chicanos in southern California may express their need to distinguish themselves from Mexicans recently learning English through a higher frequency of more standard English-like pronunications, whereas in west Texas, where Mexi-

cans have much higher prestige than Chicanos, the opposite may be the case. At this point these comments are not documented in linguistic research, but they do underline the fact that social factors may bring about variation in the choice and frequency of those linguistic parameters of Chicano English specified below.

1. Alternation of /ch/ and /sh/.

   Could you chow me the sheck?

   The shild is going to chursh.

Such an alternation occurs perhaps half of the time in Chicano English and has equally been noted in Chicano Spanish with no apparent linguistic environment or specific word location as conditioner. That is, either sound might appear in a different place in the same word within the same sentence. Eleven researchers have noted that these two sounds are undoubtedly in a state of change; but while Ornstein (1974) claims they are in the process of merger, Wald (1976) believes they are in the process of unmerger. The only given is that the alternation of these two sounds is extremely typical of a Chicano English speaker.

2. Devoicing of /s/, /v/, and /j/ so that /z/ is realized as /s/, /v/ is realized as /f/ and /j/ is realized as /č/.

| /s/ | /f/ | /c/ |
|---|---|---|
| [gays] for guys | [laf] for love | [laenwič] for language |
| [was] for was | [haef] for have | [ceynč] for change |
| [iysiy] for easy | | |
| [lus] for lose | | |

The use of /s/ for /z/ sounds can be noted almost consistently in Chicano English speech, whether at the beginning, medial, or final part of the word. Thompson (1975) suggests in his study of second generation urban

Mexican-American males in Austin, Texas, that "devoicing seems to predict the presence of other features of Mexican-American 'accent'" as well. In audition, pronunciation is an extremely frequent one, since the grammatical characteristics of English bring it into play over and over through noun plurals (e.g., [bIrds] "birds" or [deys] "days") and third person singular present tense verbs (e.g., [sIngs] "sings" or [pleys] "plays"). However, there have also been noted cases of hypercorrection in which the exact opposite may occur: the use of /z/ for /s/ in English (e.g., [reyz] "race" or [hawz] "house") (Metcalf, 1972).

3. Occasional defricitivizing of /θ/ and /ð/ so that /θ/ is realized as /t/ and /d/ is realized as /d/.

| | |
|---|---|
| [tin] for think | [dey] for dey |
| [tIk] for thick | [dIs] for this |
| | [daet] for that |

This speech feature is most noted among lower-class Chicanos. Since they most frequently have contact with Black English speakers and this speech trait is most prominent in Black English, some have suggested it is the result of this contact. However, our observations are that it occurs with less frequency in Chicano English speech, when it does occur, than in Black English. One could, of course, argue that defricitivizing is a by-product of contact with Spanish, but observations of new learners of English who are Spanish native speakers indicate that they do not have much difficulty with this particular aspect of English. This suggests that its source is other than in Spanish contact.

4. Reduction of consonant clusters in word-final position:

| | |
|---|---|
| [war] for ward | [star] for start |
| [har] for hard | [haen] for hand |

This pronunciation trait is also well-noted in Black English. Just as in Black English, the deletion of final consonants affects the grammatical markings typical of standard English, e.g., possessives "dog's" [dog], past tense "talked" [tak], and third person singular present tense "speaks" [spiyk]. However, it seems that Chicano English varies from Black English in that consonant cluster reduction affects only /t/ or /d/ sounds (as in [wan] for "wanted" or [frɛn] for "friend") and in some cases even nonfinal /t/ or /d/ are deleted (as in [Is] for "its"). Again, consonant cluster reduction seems more prominent among working-class Chicano English speakers than middle-class speakers.

5. Deletion of intervocalic flaps.

[sanliy] for suddenly [stadiŋ] for studying

6. Laxing of tense vowels: /iy/ to /I/, /ey/ to /ɛ/, and /uw/ to /U/.

| /I/ | /ɛ/ | /U/ |
|---|---|---|
| [fil] for feel | [sɛl] for sale | [fUl] for fool |
| [spIk] for speak | [hɛt] for hate | [skUl] for school |
| [dIs] for these | [mɛl] for mail | |

The laxing of these three tense standard English vowels produces many homophonous forms as a result (e.g., "this" and "these," "his" and "he's," "feel" and "fill," "sell" and "sale," or "fool" and "full"). These and other forms are also homophonous in interference English, but are represented by the tense counterpart rather than the lax one. This suggests a diagnostic linguistic feature separating interference English and Chicano English. For example, interference speakers would pronounce the following pairs differently from Chicano English speakers:

| | Interference | Chicano English |
|---|---|---|
| this/these | [diys] | [dIs] or [ðIs] |
| sell/sale | [seyl] | [sɛ́l] |
| full/fool | [fuwl] | [fUl] |

Besides these homophonous forms, there is also an extension in speech of the tensing to nonhomophonous forms producing very unusual pronunciations (e.g., [biid] for "bleed" or [nid] for "need"). Gonzalez (1977) has suggested that this laxing occurs in adolescents and adults but that children may not make such a distinction. It is possible that he was referring to socialization reflected through Chicano English as a social, ethnic dialect.

7. Realization of /a/ for /ʌ/ in stressed syllables.

[drags] for drugs [faniy] for funny

This pronunciation feature of Chicano English has been observed by numerous researchers (Lynn, 1945; Natalicio and Williams, 1972; Register, 1977). It likewise produces several homophonous word forms (e.g., "dock" and "duck" or "robber" and "rubber").

8. Different word distribution of /ɛ́/ and /ae/

[bɛ́k] for back but [baed] for bed

[bɛ́t] for bat

It is difficult to explain why a dialect would continue to use two sounds, such as the two above, yet distribute them differently but, this also happens in many other dialects of the world. In this case, although "back" is pronounced [bɛ́k], one does not in turn say [bɛ́d] for "bed." Perhaps this trait of Chicano English, more than any other, lends weight to the argument that it is not simply a product of interference, for in this case both sounds can be and are pronounced. It is their distribution in words that has changed for no apparent reason that can be related to Spanish. If an explanation exists, it might be related to other English dialects. For example,

in Los Angeles a sound change is in process among many non-Chicano and Chicano speakers in which /ɛ/ is pronounced as /ae/ before /l/ as in [bael] for "bell" or [aelǝveydǝr] for "elevator." This very frequent and linguistically defined pronunciation may, in turn, have influenced other pronunciations that do not involve /l/.

9. Realization of /w/ for /hw/.

[wat] for what [wǝr] for where

This speech feature is not restricted to Chicano English and, in fact, exists in a variety of nonstandard English dialects throughout the country. Nevertheless, it is frequent in Chicano English and results in several very common homophonous combinations (e.g., "were" and "where," "which" and "witch").

10. Shift of stress on noun compounds from the first word to the second.

mini-SKIRT for "MINI-skirt"

trouble-MAKER for "TROUBLE-maker"

11. Shift of stress on verb compounds from the second word to the first.

STAND up for "stand UP"

COME in for "come IN"

12. Shift of stress on various different words.

reaLIZE for "REAlize"

ASSociation for "associAtion"

13. Rising pitches throughout the sentence to emphasize words.

c h ʃ king in "He was ch ʃ k ing on it."

14. Double negation in sentences.

I ain't got no problems.

I never learn(ed) nothing.

15. Occasional substitution of prepositions, especially in some verb compounds.

get out from for "get away from"

Example: He wants to get out from his problems.

pass to for "go on to" or "pass"

Example: He passed to fourth.

## LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

The linguistic parameters described above have significant implications for literacy development--especially learning to write--in ways that are not always obvious. We would suggest that it is important for bilingual educators to be cautious of the possibility that what appears to be the product of interference between Spanish and English may, in fact, be interference between Chicano English and written conventions of standard English. Penfield (1982; in press-a) studied a special group of Chicano students who had acquired spoken English as children in monolingual environments but later had been educated in Mexico where their literacy development was exclusively in Spanish. Upon entering high school and college in the United States, these students spoke fluently in Chicano English but were in the incipient stage of English literacy development. The study, which compared natural speech forms with written composition errors, revealed that these students relied heavily on their own pronounciations when writing in English. At first glance, their written errors seem to reflect an inadequate control of syntax similar to interference English speakers; however, an in-depth analysis reveals that most of the errors reflect incorrect word choice and misplaced word boundaries, both based on phonetic principles of Chicano English. Since many of the errors are typical of those made by monolingual English-speaking children

when learning to write, it is argued here that, for this type of student, interference is between two codes--the speech code of Chicano English and the orthographic code of standard English--rather than two languages. The following discussion illustrates the nature of this type of interference.

Writing teachers, whether at the beginning, intermediate, or advanced level, often use deviations from the written standard English form as a source of information. On the principle of error analysis, many educators base their understanding of the learner's competence on the type and number of errors made. It is also common to prescribe future lessons for students on the basis of these deviations or errors. Thus, educators at all instruction levels need to understand that the source of errors in writing may indeed be dialect, rather than language. Sometimes, of course, attributing the source of an error to only one cause is problematic. There are, however, some more obvious instances which can be traced to interference between Chicano English and standard English dialects. These are suggested below.

## DISTINGUISHING WORD BOUNDARIES

Chicano English speakers unfamiliar with English orthographic conventions rely on their own pronunciation when representing the spoken word in written form. However, the English orthographic system usually does not work phonetically so that distinctions found in Chicano English may not be represented in written English. On the other hand, the orthography makes certain distinctions that spoken systems, whether standard English or Chicano English, do not make. Word boundaries are an example of the latter

linguistic principle of written English, i.e., an orthographic distinction exists for the same pronunciation, as illustrated in:

The wolf was at bed and he said coming. (for "come in")

The student who wrote this obviously pronounced "coming" and "come in" identically, but when forced to choose orthographically guessed wrong. Other examples illustrating this problem are:

I will trai to maked better. (for "make it")

You are welcome to bisited visit any time. (for "visit it")

Both examples illustrate a phonetic type of spelling, confirmed by other examples in each sentence (i.e., trai for "try" and the b in "bisited"). Both reflect confusion over the word boundaries in the written system for two meaning units which the writer pronounces identically: the past tense of regular verbs, -ed and the pronoun it.

At first glance, it is easy to interpret such sentences as reflections of interference English, since they appear to be errors in sentence formation (syntax). However, a closer look at the pronunciation system on which the writer relies shows that they are, rather, due to unfamiliarity with English orthographic conventions. Other examples that fall into this category follow.

| | |
|---|---|
| ...because I fall and the water. | (for "...because I fell in the water.") |
| My friend has I lot of party's. | (for "a lot of parties") |
| I private myself of doing something. | (for "prevent myself from...") |

All three examples reflect an attempt to choose the correct spelling for two or more forms that were pronounced identically, i.e., homophonous forms. In the first example, "and" and "in" are apparently homophonous forms; in the

second, "I" and "a"; and in the third, "private" and "prevent." Although word boundary is not affected this time, there is still the possible interpretation of ungrammaticality when in fact the principle on which the writer is working is the same as above, phonetic.

Homophonous forms also give monolingual English speakers problems when they are learning to write. The result is often mis-selection. One typically difficult group for monolinguals is: their/they're/there. Most teachers are aware of problems that their students have with such words. Even students at advanced stages of literacy may confuse these homophonous forms orthographically. Sometimes, even bilingual teachers may not be aware of the numerous homophonous forms found in Chicano English that cause problems in written communication if not amended. Again, many of them appear to be grammatically related when, in fact, they are based on the pronunciation system. For example, the following three pairs are frequent in most communication and perform a crucial grammatical function: will/would, won't/want, and where/were. In many Anglo dialects of English and standard English, none of these pairs would be homophonous, but in Chicano English all three usually are. Thus, in written English, Chicano English speakers write sentences like the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| What will you like? | (for "What would you like?") |
| They wanted to take her out but she didn't won't to. | (for "...she didn't want to.") |
| Women seem incapable to accomplish a job were strength and intelligents are combine. | ("...a job where strength and intelligence are combined.") |

Given the context and the other words in the sentence, it gradually becomes clear that these errors are due to homphony rather than ignorance of how to form a sentence.

Homophonous Forms

As previously discussed, the contrasts in sounds found in standard English are sometimes nonexistent in Chicano English (e.g., /s/ vs. /z/). Although English orthography is far from phonetic, for the speaker of standard English there are often different spellings that correlate to distinctions in standard English speech, e.g., "once" and "ones" to the /s/ vs. /z/ distinction. For the speaker of Chicano English who does not have this distinction in speech, there is a great chance that the wrong word will be chosen in writing. The following examples reflect this problem:

A person on a diet who is loosing... (for "losing")

Ones you get married he turns in a sort of monster. (for "mounster")

They are trying to proof this theory. (for "prove")

We belief that we have to get married. (for "believe")

He adviced them what to do. (for "advised")

All of the above examples are illustrations of the lack of a voiced/voiceless contrast in Chicano English (i.e., /s/ for both /z/ and /s/ and /f/ for both /f/ and /v/).

The tendency to pronounce words with "th" spelling as /t/ or /d/ occasionally appears in the writing system as well, e.g.:

tanks (for "thanks")

even do (for "even though")

Especially common in the writing of Chicano English speakers is the lack of contrast between lax and tense vowels (/I/ and /iy/ as in "bit" and "beat," /E/ and /ey/ as in "met" and "mate," and /U/ and /uw/ as in "look" and "Luke"). Each pair is often homophonous in Chicano English, especially if the vowels precede /l/. Also, sometimes hypercorrect forms occur in which

standard English tense vowels are laxed in Chicano English (e.g., /splk/ for "speak"). Orthographic writing errors reflect such homophony in frequent occurrence:

Stop eating food when **filling** ill. (for "feeling")

Governments are permitting the **seil** of pornography. (for "sale")

The role of women has **being** very different. (for "been")

They are living together without **been** married. (for "being")

We are all human **beens**. (for "beings")

**This** are my reasons for it. (for "these")

The last example is the most frequently encountered and also the most difficult to correct, yet the "been"/"being" confusion is the most significant grammatically. All are the result of homophony.

There is some evidence to suggest that **have** and **had** are also homophonous in Chicano English. At this point we can only suggest that in the writing of new literates these two are frequently confused, causing problems in intended meaning that disturb the message, e.g.:

> The role of women has been very different for us. Women had always being in the house to take care of the children.

Syntactic Forms (Sentence Structure)

A variety of nonstandard syntactic forms occasionally are found in the writing of even advanced literates who speak Chicano English. One, which we will refer to as "topicalization," does not at first seem deviant for standard English, but a closer look reveals that it is.

**To speak about that, it's** a little difficult for me.

I think they taught us good since **what I know it** was from them.

In both cases the topic is given and followed by a pronoun that refers back to it. Although topicalization has been documented as typical even in

monolingual English-speaking children, it is not yet acceptable in written standard English prose.[5] This is also true of double negation, which crops up consistently in the writing of new literates who are Chicano English speakers, e.g.:

My four years I spend there I did not learn nothing.

Perhaps the most characteristic structural trait of Chicano English is its use of embedded question inversion, as in the following examples:

I ask myself what would I do without a friend.

Also very frequent, even in advanced writing, is the use of prepositions that deviates sharply from standard English, e.g.:

concerned of for "concerned about"

take care about for "take care of"

left to (place) for "left for (place)"

McQuade (1978), who found these and other preposition particles to be common in the writing of university level bilinguals in south Texas, attributed only 50 percent of the cases to Spanish interference. Whatever the source of deviation, the communicative function of these small words can be great enough to distort the intended meaning in written standard English.

Several studies of university level writing by Chicanos (Dubois, 1974, 1975, 1979; Hoffer, 1977; McQuade, 1978, 1980, 1981) suggest that overall there is a low level syntactic elaboration in which simple sentences predominate and relative clauses and other types of subordination are few and far between. Comparing Chicano freshmen at Pan American University in Edinburg,

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[5]Topicalization often has been assumed to be typical only among speakers of Black English or other ethnic dialects of lower socio-economic classes. However, research on monolingual and bilingual children has revealed that it is a common process among both groups of children, no matter what their socio-economic class (Cotton, 1974).

Texas, with twelfth graders in the San Francisco Bay area of California who were not Chicano bilinguals, McQuade (1978) discovered the Pan American group to use less subordination and fewer relative adjectival clauses compared to the twelfth graders. In fact, as far as syntactic elaboration was concerned, the Pan American freshmen were performing at the level of Loban's (1976) students in the fifth through eighth grades who used about 40 percent of all dependent clauses as adverbials and much fewer as adjectives. And so it appears that Chicano English may subtly influence the clausal sentence structure in ways considered unacceptable in written standard English.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Literacy development among Chicano English speakers has many implications for the classroom, some of which have already been mentioned. The most obvious is that new literates who are Chicano English speakers may have more difficulty in adjusting the dialect to the orthography of standard English than from interference with Spanish or other languages. The first task for the teacher is to accurately attribute the source of the deviations from standard English that their students make.

How can the teacher help students bridge the difference between their vernacular and standard written English? This question can be answered only after the source of each deviation has been ascertained, for different sources require different solutions. In terms of word boundaries, the teacher can point out meaning differences to distinguish the orthographic distinctions (e.g., past tense is indicated by "-ed" but an object or idea is referred to as "it." Where homophony affects only lexical items (e.g., "private" vs. "prevent"), a semantic interpretation or, for bilingual students,

a Spanish translation, should suffice. However, in homophonous cases where the grammatical function is at issue, meaning is a poor association to depend upon. The student must be aware of combinations that are obligatory when such words are used. For example, "been" and "being" can be explained using the principles of structural linguistics that linearly specify the combinations that can and/or must co-occur with each. In standard English, "been" must always be preceded by some form of "have" (have/ has/had), whereas "being" must be preceded by some form of "be" (is/are/was/ am/were). Such co-occurrence rules can help students choose the correct form.

In the case of homophony based on a lack of contrasts in Chicano English students can be made aware that such a contrast exists in standard English and the writing system often depicts it, albeit rather strangely and non-phonetically. Meaning is one means of remembering the orthographic contrasts, whereas grammatical function is more appropriate in other cases (e.g., "belief" vs. "believe" can be explained by grammatical function: the first is always a noun, the second, a verb).

Lack of syntactic elaboration is difficult to handle pedagogically. Some have tried using intensive sentence-combining in the hope that it would carry over into spontaneous prose writing (Amastae, 1981), while others have simply treated the lack of elaboration as one stage in the writing process through which students pass if given enough opportunity to read and write at an advanced level. But actually, the pedagogical problem of increasing syntactic elaboration remains to be resolved by teachers of literacy to nonstandard English speakers. Right now, there are no clear-cut solutions available.

A final comment about the obvious in literacy development paractices. We must emphasize that learning to write standard English does not mean first learning to speak it. In this author's view, it would be a great waste of time to insist that new literates must first learn to speak standard English like a midwestern Anglo before they can learn to write it. This is not to say that standard English should not serve as a useful bridge in helping the new literate learn the orthographic conventions. At least passive knowledge of standard English may indeed be useful in the acquisition of English literacy, but forcing Chicanos to change their way of speaking English in order to learn to write makes no more sense than forcing an east Texas child, or a child from Boston or the Bronx, to drop their speech peculiarities and replace them with midwestern English so that they can learn to write. No such suggestion would ever be accepted by members of these communities. No such suggestion should be considered by the Chicano community either.

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